



## **State of Connecticut**

### **African-American Affairs Commission**

**State Capitol**

**210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**860-240-8555**

Good Afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative Analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut. I am writing today to support [S.B. No. 796](#) AAC Lengthy sentences for crime committed by a child or youth and the sentencing of a child or youth of certain felony offences.

Currently 100% of juveniles' serving a life sentence without parole are African Americans, 68% of juveniles serving over 50 years are African-American and 62% of Juveniles serving over 12 years are African-American. These statistics are alarming considering the entire African American population for the state is only approximately 10%. There needs to be a complete overhaul of the justice system in the state and I do commend the legislature for making strides in the juvenile justice policy area however more needs to be done and this bill will help with that process.

By passing this legislation Connecticut will be in compliance with the US supreme-court rulings in Miller v. Alabama. The bill would let minors serve 60% or 12 years of their sentence

#### *Our Mission*

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whichever is longer beefier being eligible to have a parole hearing and those who are sentenced to more than 50 years be eligible for a parole hearing after serving 30 years. In some developed nations a life sentence constitutes as 30 years as there is the belief that after 30 years in prison is enough for any individual. Only a handful of countries allow juveniles to be handed down life sentences and of the countries that allow these the United States is the only country that actually has minors serving these sentences. It is also interesting to once again highlight that in Connecticut only African American youth are serving life sentences.

I urge you to pass this bill and I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Subira Gordon

Legislative Analyst

African American Affairs Commission